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LIBERATION OF CUBA

The end-of-the-year rally in Miami honoring the imprisoned Cuban invaders for their valiant fight was a full of emotion. Many wept, and shouted "war" and "freedom" in the streets. Millions of Cubans were stirred to action by the thought that the United States had snatched from the jaws of death the Cuban people's well-deserved right to this country and to the freedom that the U.S. can tolerate any regime in Cuba so long as it is freely chosen, is not Marxist-Leninist (whatever that means these days), and is not friendly to the United States.

The heart of hope and forgiveness was held out even to those who may serve Castro, provided they repent. But, beyond "bearing witness" to the cause of freedom, Mr. Kennedy's words and presence raised more questions than they answered.

How is Castro to be deposed, and what is the role in that mission of the brigade so warmly saluted? By what means can the President deliver on his promise that the flag of revolt, of which he is now the custodian, "will be returned to this brigade in a free Havana"? Is this brigade to be kept intact as a fighting force, groomed as an elite in a post-Castro regime? The President, like all the rest of us, has "the strongest wish that Cuba shall one day be free again." But wishes alone will not dislodge a firmly entrenched government.

"This brigade," the President said, "will deserve to march at the head of the free column" when Cuba is liberated; it is "the point of the spear, the arrow's head." Can we be sure that these courageous men best represent the aspirations of most pro-democratic Cubans? To take an example, one of the six brigade spokesmen who called on the President in Palm Beach and who stood at his side during the ceremonies in Miami is Manuel Atme.

Atme is the man selected by CIA to command the invasion forces in Guatemala. His military competence has not been questioned, but his identification as a U. S. instrument, some would say, has compromised him with many of the Cubans.

The President told the brigade

and the message was beamed throughout Latin America — that all men who fight for freedom are brothers and shall be united in their country and others are free.

a statement which goes far beyond any limited objective of getting "offensive" Soviet weapons out of Cuba and might even be compared by some to Mr. Khrushchev's statement a few days earlier approving "a just liberation war."

What does this rhetoric mean? On his return from his meeting with Mr. Khrushchev in Vienna, Mr. Kennedy told the American people that he and Khrushchev have wholly different views of right and wrong, of what is an internal affair and what is aggression.

Are their views so totally different? Perhaps they are. But Mr. Kennedy has not yet clearly spelled out to the American public, the Russians, or skeptical ex-colonials around the world, exactly where the difference lies. Fortunately, however, the soaring platitudes that echo universal ambitions are in both cases subordinate to the realistic knowledge that little wars of liberation could set off nuclear wars that will liberate no one. — The New Republic

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